192 with nature; the same terms designate the parts of animals, plants, or even objects. These words serve as roots, as do the names of the four elements and of their properties. Two consequences follow:

1. A great ease in forming compound words; 2. The existence [194] of a multiplicity of homonyms which we can distinguish only by the context, but which the natives distinguish by differences in tone or in vowel length.

E. Numeration

802 In contrast to the Ouolof and Peul, who first count to five and then say "five and one," "five and two," etc., the Bambara have a different name for each number from one to ten (the word "five," doulou, [16] comes from "hand"; the word "ten", tan, from "to thank," to give both hands). After ten, they count "ten and one," "ten and two," up to 20, which is said as two tens, then three tens, four tens, etc., up to 80. The series begins again after 80 as it does in French after 100.

The Bambara have graphic signs to represent numbers. These 212 signs have been studied by S. de Ganay (1).

1. S. de Ganay, "Graphie Bambara des nombres" [Bambara Number Writing]. [Ed., Journal de la Société de Africanistes, No. 2, 1950.]

[184] The graphic system varies with regions and sometimes from one village to another, but the most widespread method uses a series of vertical lines, each line representing a unit. To indicate that the number is doubled, the lines are placed inside a circle or crossed by a horizontal bar: |||| or or = four. To indicate an uneven number, a line is added under the horizontal bar.

But a line may indicate not only a unit, but a group of ten, and even a "hundred," keme (whose value is 80). To keep this clear, an arc is put over the line: = 80.

212 801 Some systems represent ten by ten lines or by five barred lines under a single line. This method has a religious origin; it recalls that "creation is the issue of a unique principle symbolized

114

Ma n'zira ba, etc., does not mean "great baobab of man." The real meaning is: "O man who is a great baobab." In writing it I prefer a "z" to an "a." Usually the Bambara soften the hard sound by a euphonious little "n." With a hard "s" the word sira cannot be distinguished from the word "tobacco": sira siramougou, "snuff tobacco"; n'ziremougou, "baobab flour."

[194]

776 a purely Bambara term to express their idea /of these spirits/, and
782 they to the word djiné; they call them gnéna.

776 Before the arrival of the Moslems, the Negro sacrificed to beings
782 to whom they have attributed bodies and souls, although imponderable
177 and invisible, who are intermediate between men and angels and whom
798 the Arabs call الجن el djiné. But they also sacrificed to evil beings, superior to the former in power, whom they call boli. The legend of the boli, an ironic legend which I will tell in full when I discuss this matter, is sufficient proof of this belief. For the Moslems of the Sudan only two things here below /70/ are worthy of attention: Mecca (Makka) and Stamboul -- old Abdul Hamid, Sultan of Constantinople -- who in their eyes, as in the eyes of all Moslems of our colonies, is the great Pope of Islam. Everything that does not bear the stamp of Mecca, everything that does not come from Stamboul, is to be rejected and scorned. Thus the Bambara, fertile in expedients, quickly managed to find a way out of their discussions with the propagators of Islam: "All our boli come from Mecca," was their weapon of war.

776 The Bambara were pursued from every side, unable to perform
177 publicly even religious ceremonies in honor of simple genii. Can
798 one believe that they added others that were still more terrible? As conquerors the Moslems have always ruthlessly opposed idolatry, destroying its temples and overthrowing its altars. "Believe or die" has always been their motto and always will be as long as they feel

776 196 What is the meaning of the word sa? Could it be the original name of the Divinity? Since certain Bantu tribes have a high regard for snakes and dedicate a cult to them, some Europeans have wanted to see in it a translation of the word "snake." That is a great and fundamental error. The word sa, "snake," and the word sa in the sentences sa bi fign, sa bi na, etc., may have the same spelling, but [194] the pronunciation is different. The hard "s" of sa, "snake," is pronounced by opening the teeth slightly and protruding the lips, and the word sa in sa bi fign, etc., is pronounced by closing the teeth and pulling in the lips. Thus, these are two quite distinct words. Moreover, to claim the snake is, or has been, the Bambara divinity seems to me a piece of stupidity. If they do not claim any bond of real or physical kinship even with the animals that are their taboo, one must believe a fortiori that they would not claim /77/ an animal, even a snake, as Creator and sovereign Lord. Some Bambara have it as a family taboo, and a branch of the Mande people have such great respect for the python Minia (1) that now they are known only by the

776 825 101

1. The Baganda of Uganda before they became Christian venerated the snake as the dwelling place of a demon. Their snake has a great resemblance to the animals that are family taboos for the Bambara, or better still, to the python Minia, taboo of the Mande branch commonly known under the name of Minia-n-ka. Since the Minia-n-ka derive their name from the word Minia, name of the snake that is venerated and an object of public worship, some have insisted that the Bambara or Bamana derive their name from the word Bama, meaning "cayman" /a species of alligator/. If the cayman, Bama in